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Landwirtschaft und Sozialdemokratie in sittlicher Beleuchtung. Ein Beitrag zur Abwehr sozialdemokratischer Landagitation.
By HERMANN KÖHLER. Erste drei Hefte. Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1903. 8vo, pp. vi + 145.

THE radical political movement now so prominent in Germany under the name of the Social Democracy has, in face of a half-century of active opposition, especially from church and state, made for itself the rather astounding following of upward of three million voters. As far as can be made out, however, these three million persons are predominatingly of one class, the factory workers, and the immediate aim of the Social Democratic movement, the conquest by the ballot box of the machinery of government, can never be achieved so long as its following is thus limited to a single class. The adept party leaders of the agitation have long since recognized this fact, and during the past ten years, especially in southern Germany, the supreme effort of their propagandist work has been to arouse in the rural districts the same "class consciousness" they have so sedulously, and apparently so successfully, awakened in the artisans and other city dwellers.

It is to avert the possible success of this attempt that Herr Hermann Köhler has written his *Landwirtschaft und Sozialdemokratie*. To quote from his preface:

The aim of this writing is to offer definite and necessary indications for defense against the Socialist party in their campaign to win the agricultural laborer and the small proprietor.

In the first division of his work Herr Köhler shows, with much detail, how on questions of theory the party has become divided within itself. He points out by many illustrations how a well-defined group has grown up within the party—a group which, accepting the later doctrines in political economy, is therefore inclined to deny the main premises of the Marxian economics and to ask for a revision of the party program. He seems to believe, as many others writing before the contrary evidences furnished by the recent Dresden congress would also have felt justified in believing, that the revisionists formed a very large and influential group within the party. The party program, he says, does not receive undivided faith. Now, the Social Democratic party program, says Herr Köhler, is to the socialistic movement what the apostolic symbols are to the Christian church, and it is despicable in a party which itself fails to unite upon

its *credo* to make, as it does, an actual proselytizing crusade and offer, with all the positiveness of one who has no doubts, a social theory that in the present promises little beyond struggle, and in the future nothing that is certain unless the party program is absolutely sound. On these grounds he holds that the Social Democrats stand convicted of insincerity, in that they try to gain for purely political ends a following for a doctrine to which they themselves do not give absolute allegiance.

In addition to this insincerity, which he offers as first reason for mistrusting the socialist, he adds the imputation of creating resultless unrest and unhappiness. The socialists, he says, stir persistently and intentionally the worst passions in men. They publish vast quantities of propagandist literature—books, pamphlets, newspapers, and almanacs—and citations from these and from the speeches at clubs and public gatherings are used to show that they send to the German countryside “an infection whence the poison of discontent, envy, and bitterness will spread through the mass of people” (II, p. 18). In the author’s view, the socialist would rob the peasant of his religion and of his respect for those officially empowered to administer it; would teach him to scout the law and to rebel against the duty of military service which the national standards and true patriotism now impose upon him; would even breed nonexistent at present a distrust and hatred between those who labor and those who employ labor. He puts the thought forcibly:

To awaken all possible evil passions from the simple agricultural laborer up to the small proprietor, to poison at its roots also in the country [as he believes they have already done in the cities] the relation between him who offers labor and him who takes it, and to bring the first of these more and more against all organized authority—this is the avowed aim of their usual and objectionable efforts. (II, p. 61.)

This result, says our author, is made possible only, on the one hand, by false pictures of the tyranny of the landowners and exaggerations of the actual miseries of the peasants, and, on the other, by equally false pictures of the liberating results to be expected from the realization of a socialistic régime.

Herr Köhler concedes that there is want among the husbandry, but assigns any especial misery in this class to such causes as foreign competition rather than to the class oppression of which the socialists talk. He avers, moreover, that the socialists are really careless of the actual need and suffering of the peasantry; that they are

usually unwilling, or, if willing, are unable, to understand or to give aid to the rural misery ; that, given over to mere party politics, they do not really desire any amelioration of unsatisfactory conditions, reckoning the sorrows of the unsuccessful and the unfortunate as a chief means for winning voters for the Social Democratic party. Finally our author, elaborating his belief that the Social Democratic teachings minimize or eradicate true patriotism and destroy all spur to individual initiative, sees in this fact the Social Democrat's final and perhaps greatest menace to the national welfare. He brings expert military testimony to support his conviction that, as the basis of an effective army, the peasant is the hope of the German fatherland. It then follows that, if the peasant ally himself with the Social Democracy, it will mean a defection in patriots such that the national independence will be seriously jeopardized. Again we are told that any party which would teach the peasant that he is no longer to be as an individual a factor in industry, but is of necessity to become part of a system of production on a large scale, any party whose tenets accentuate the already too great desire of the peasant to move to the cities, is proved thereby a menace to public order and to sound social progress.

Having thus sounded the warning note, pointed out the numerical strength of the enemy, and his theoretical, political, and ethical unsoundness, Herr Köhler proposes means to face and conquer this enemy. He believes that the peasant will never be won to Social Democracy, nor learn to hate his employer, if, by government or private means, he be placed in a position of independence and self-respect ; and this he thinks can be done without awaiting a socialist political revolution. He proposes first, efforts for organization of the agricultural laborers on principles other than those of the Social Democratic movement, organizations for upbuilding and not for attack, organizations for purely industrial and social purposes, and not for party tactics. Secondly, "inner colonization," the transference of needy groups from densely occupied to sparsely populated lands, would, he thinks, stimulate new life, save the German peasantry from an otherwise certain decline, and rob the socialist's airy promises of a distant future happiness of all their force by giving immediate well-being. Thirdly, he makes a warm plea for disseminating through the rural districts co-operative societies, particularly credit banks on the plan of those of Raffeisen, holding that the appeal such associations make to the intelligence and imagination of

the peasant cannot but develop and socialize him, and so build for individual independence and national welfare.

Herr Köhler writes from no cursory acquaintance with the socialist movement. If his work remains a somewhat heated polemic against the Social Democratic party, it is not because he has failed to acquaint himself with the theories and the personnel of the movement. He arraigns the doctrine and its political expression from no mere prejudice, but from the matured conviction of one who has made unlimited research among the most recent writings of his notably prolific adversaries. The reader of his work will find himself in touch with an enormous bibliography. It would perhaps be well for the candid inquirer, before accepting the views of Herr Köhler, to read in connection with them some less unsympathetic study of the socialistic agrarian movement—such, for example, as the lengthy chapter in Professor Edgard Milhaud's *La démocratie socialiste allemande*—and note how citations from some of the same writings as those on which Herr Köhler bases his opinions can lead another to somewhat different conclusions. In that it is perfectly true that the future progress of the Social Democratic agitation now rests with the conquest of the peasant, books such as this of Herr Köhler have special interest, and any student of the political movement in Germany, or any student of the socialist movement, will find much to repay his reading of this latest of many attacks upon the much-belabored socialists, who, open as they are to much of the criticism that Herr Köhler with so many others has leveled at them, have always this much in their favor: that, creating adversaries, they at least arouse men from Philistine satisfaction with existing conditions; asserting extreme social disorders, they fix attention on those really existing; developing a theory of social service and associated effort on fallacious grounds, they press the social question, and force him who would refute their doctrine to propound a sounder theory of social growth.

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PROFESSOR ROWE is well prepared for the discussion of Porto Rican problems by a residence on the island as a member of two commissions to revise and codify the laws.